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**North Dakota Grain Dealers Association
Testimony in Opposition of HB 1614
House Transportation Committee-Rep Dan Ruby, Chairman
February 13, 2025**

The North Dakota Grain Dealers Association is a 113-year-old organization whose purpose is to further the interests of the cooperative and independent concerns of North Dakota engaged in the handling, processing and distribution of grain and other like commodities. Our membership comprises over 90% of the commercial grain handling facilities in North Dakota.

Many grain companies offer their producer customers a benefit and convenience of shorter hauls to market by manning branch locations or “truck houses” that are close to the producer’s location. The grain dumped at these branch locations is then moved to terminals to be loaded onto railcars. This grain movement is accomplished by truck hauls using licensed CDL drivers.

If you ask most elevator managers what their biggest challenge is they will tell you labor, specifically finding qualified CDL drivers. Recent changes made to the CDL licensing requirements have made the issue much worse. As the number of licensed CDL drivers declines, the cost of keeping them employed increases. This creates higher transportation costs which may get to a point where it is no longer feasible to operate truck houses. Producers will bear the expense of longer hauls to deliver their crops to market. Autonomous trucks could offer a key efficiency tool that could help alleviate the shortage of CDL drivers.

We understand the safety considerations, but also feel that with advancements in technology those concerns will wane over time. We don’t feel that putting a prohibition of autonomous trucks into North Dakota law would be a wise decision when we are at the threshold of being able to adapt this technology.

We urge you to oppose HB 1614.

Sincerely,

Stu Letcher
Executive Vice President